THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) This Ministry is primarily responsible for the development of National Highways and the development of all other roads is the responsibility of the respective State Governments. As regards National Highways, decision has already been taken to involve private sector in the development and maintenance of National Highways passing through various States including the State of Maharashtra.

(b) The guidelines for taking BOT projects on National Highways have already been formulated and circulated to all the State Governments including the State of Maharashtra.

(c) Normally the BOT projects are financed/executed by the entrepreneur himself and hence no specific allocation is made for such projects. Taking up of BOT projects on National Highways in the State of Maharashtra has already started. The costs of land acquisition, shifting of utilties and environmental clearance are the responsibility of the Government.

Operation of inter-State Buses between Delhi and Neighbouring States

2450. SHRI SOM PAL: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is true that there have been several disputes between the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi and the neighbouring States in the matter of operating inter-state bus routes;

(b) if so, the State-wise details thereof;

(c) the steps being contemplated to have some standing arrangements and rules to take care of such disputes; and

(d) what have been the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha.

Cohia Bridge in Goa in National Highway-17

2451. SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) what is the present position of the works on Cohia Bridge in Goa on National Highways-17;

(b) when tenders for this bridge were called and when the works were allotted;

(c) whether proposals to launch this bridge on BOLT basis was considered; and

(d) how many proposals have been received to build this bridge on BOLT basis?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) Presumably the Hon'ble Member is referring to Colvale bridge for which the construction work is in progress.

(b) Tenders for this bridge were called on 28th March, 1996 and work awarded on 30th January, 1997.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Improvement of Calcutta and Haldia Ports

2452. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the plans to improve the cargo-handling capacity of the Calcutta and Haldia ports; and

(b) whether programmes are also on the anvil to effect corresponding

improvement in road and rail linkages with the two ports?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATARAMAN): (a) During 9th Five Year Plan 1997—2002, it is proposed to enhance the POL handling capacity of Haldia by 7.5 million tonnes.

(b) Yes, Sir. It is proposed to take up infrastructure development by improvement/strengthening of roads in an around the Docks maintained by Calcutta Port Trust in phases. The railway tracks of Calcutta Dock system have been planned to be replaced during 9th Five Year Plan. Two additional locomotives are proposed to be procured at Haldia. Development of additional railway infrastructure inside and outside Haldia Dock is also proposed to be undertaken.

Sea worthiness of bulk carriers

2453. SHRI JAYANT KUMAR MALHOUTRA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Maritime Safety Committee raised the sea-worthiness age limit of bulk carriers from 20 to 30 years overlooking the recommendations of the International Maritime Organisation;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that the mounting loss of ships in the recent past is due to the fact that aging ships have been pressed into service;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to undertake a comprehensive review of the safety standards of the bulk carriers on a priority basis; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) No Sir. The Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organisation did not consider any such proposal.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Sethusamudram Canal Project

2454. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision to start work of SETHUSAMUDRAM CANAL PROJECT within the current year itself;

(b) whether his Ministry has requested the Ministry of Finance to allot finance for the said project;

(c) if so, the response from the Ministry of Finance in this regard;

(d) whether his Ministry is also considering to start the work of the said project with the help of either Japan or Germany; and

(e) whether the experts from the Japan or Germany visited the site of Sethusamudram Canal Project, and if so, what were their comments on the said project?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (e) The Department of Economic Affairs has been requested to pose the Project for technical assistance from the German and Japan Governments for conducting feasibility report.

Declaration of river Godavari as National Waterway

2455. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Andhra Pradesh submitted a proposal